UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/959
S/25862
28 May 1993
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-seventh session
Agenda item 30
QUESTION OF PALESTINE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-eighth year

Letter dated 28 May 1993 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your urgent attention to the serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, which is deteriorating steadily as a result of the prolonged closure of the territory and the isolation imposed by the occupying Power, and to the increasing number of casualties among the Palestinian civilian population, particularly children, resulting from the growing practice by Israeli troops of opening fire.

According to a report published recently by the Jerusalem-based Palestine Human Rights Information Center, Israel's prolonged and indefinite closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the isolation of East Jerusalem since 30 March has been "the most damaging and disruptive policy of the occupying Power on the daily lives of the Palestinian people under occupation". This policy of collective punishment has, according to the same report, "restricted the movement of millions of Palestinians and deprived them of access to health-care facilities, food and medical supplies, employment and education and places of worship in Jerusalem".

On 21 April, the New York-based human rights organization Middle East Watch expressed deep concern at the hardships caused by the closure of the territories, which include the abrupt loss of income for some 100,000 Palestinians who were employed in Israel and East Jerusalem; the lack of access to hospitals, mosques, churches, schools, banks and so on; and the fragmentation of the occupied territories into four sectors that are inaccessible to one another without permits that are hard to obtain.

In addition to this harsh policy, the Israeli armed forces have recently increased the practice of opening fire and killing Palestinian civilians,

including children. According to the Jerusalem-based Palestine Press Service, the number of Palestinians killed since the beginning of the month reached 25 on 19 May, including 6 children under 16 and one of 20 months who was killed in Jabalya refugee camp on 16 May. According to a report published in mid-May by B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, 35 Palestinian children under 16 have been killed by Israeli forces since the beginning of the year, including 13 children under the age of 13.

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to express the greatest concern at these policies and actions of the Israeli authorities, which are in violation of Israel's obligations, as the occupying Power, under the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 and numerous Security Council resolutions.

The Committee considers that, pending tangible progress in the peace process, it is of the greatest importance for the international community as a whole, and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention in particular, to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians, particularly children, living under Israeli occupation.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 30, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSE
Chairman of the
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People